



PEATWISE PROJECT (MALAYSIA)

Report on

Curriculum Development Workshop for Post-graduate Diploma in Peatland Management - Stakeholders' Preview and Input

Background

The PEATWISE project in Malaysia has at this stage completed the final draft of the post-graduate curriculum on peatland management. The curriculum has also been approved in principle by the academic authority of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), allowing the post-graduate diploma programme to commence during the fall semester of 2005.

Prior to launching of the academic programme, it was considered necessary to do final verification of the appropriateness and level of the course contents and mode of delivery, and identify infrastructural and logistical requisites. For this purpose a special workshop was held on April 1, 2005 in Kuching, with the involvement of PEATWISE resource persons from Unimas, University of Leicester and Universitas Palangka Raya and prospective students and/or their employers.

Objectives of Workshop

The specific objectives of the workshop were to:

- Brief stakeholders and potential candidates on the program specifications (structure and course outlines)
- Test run certain portions of the course modules
- Provide an opportunity for potential candidates to preview the course;
- Obtain feedback on the level, adequacy and appropriateness of the course content and modules;
- Obtain indication on the preferred mode of offering e.g. full-time, flexi-time (weekends or alternate weeks/weekends)

Date and Venue

Venue:	Kuching Hilton
Date:	1 April 2005
Time:	8.30 am – 5.00 pm

Resource Persons

<i>Name</i>	<i>Institution</i>
1. Prof Murtedza Mohamed	Unimas
2. Prof Wan Sulaiman Wan Harun	Unimas
3. Assoc Prof Dr Gabriel Tonga Noweg	Unimas
4. Assoc Prof Dr Lau Seng	Unimas
5. Dr Harwant Singh	Unimas
6. Dr Rubiah Zainuddin	Unimas
7. Dr Henk Wosten	Wageningen University
8. Dr Susan Page	University of Leicester
9. Dr Bostang Radjaguguk	Universitas Gadjah Mada
10. Mr Bambang Kartonegari	Universitas Palangka Raya

Participants

The workshop was intended to be very focus whereby the curriculum contents would be critically studied, analysed and discussed by a small group of specially selected stakeholder participants. Although the invited participants were small in number, they represent a broad spectrum of experienced professionals and decision makers from various sectors, both public and private. It was indeed encouraging to note that ALL the agencies invited were represented in the workshop. The complete list of participants and their respective agencies were:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
1. Teo Song Cheok	Public Works Department
2. Lau Chong Choon	Public Works Department
3. Bernard Chong	Public Works Department
4. David Lim	Public Works Department
5. Chen Wing Leong	Drainage & Irrigation Department
6. Alan Tan	Drainage & Irrigation Department
7. Woon Yea Yuan	KTA (Sarawak) Sdn Bhd
8. Roland Yong Chiew Ming	CRAUN Research Sdn Bhd
9. Jopen akAbut	Agriculture Department
10. Jaman Hj Osman	Agriculture Department
11. John Sabang	Sarawak Forestry Corporation
12. Sia Puon Chiew	Sarawak Forestry Corporation
13. Justine Jok Jau	Natural Resources & Environment Board
14. Michael Tingang	Natural Resources & Environment Board
15. Tom Chong	PS Konsultant Sdn Bhd

Summary of Discussion

The following are summaries of comments and discussion made on the various various aspects of the curriculum:

1. Ecology, Natural Resource and the Environment
 - The learning units (LU) are too numerous and the listing of LU did not tally with those in the synopsis.
 - The synopsis was also heavy on the text. It was suggested that certain learning units be merged and the number of hours for each LU be specified.
 - There was a need to further edit/proof read the text.

- Introduction to the concept of Strategic Environmental Assessment would be useful.
 - There is a need to allocate more time to addressing issues pertinent to peatland, e.g. issues pertaining to the definition of catchment boundaries of coastal peatland.
2. Water Resources and Hydrology
 - Too heavy on the generic issues; need to be more specific on hydrological aspects of peatland such as drainage in peat areas as the hydrological features in peat is very different from mineral soil environment.
 - Specific references to case studies (e.g. subsidence rate of peat in Balingian under different water table regimes) would be very useful.
 - Water pollution aspects be trimmed down as it would have already been addressed.
 3. Human Dimension and Resource Economics
 - The number of learning units were too numerous (need to trim down)
 4. Peatwise Research Methodologies
 - Should be changed to “Interdisciplinary Research Methodologies”
 - USLE irrelevant
 - Methodology for soils should emphasise aspects related to subsidence, water table, hydraulic conductivity, bulk density, pH and other parameters more relevant to peat soils.
 - There is a need to identify the field location for this exercise.
 5. Field Course
 - LU2 would require some revisions; the assignments should be tailored more towards addressing issues and problems in peat environment.
 - There is also a need to identify suitable field course locations in Sarawak.
 - There were suggestions that the Field Course be slotted towards the end of the programme.
 6. Admission of Non-Science Graduates
 - a. The possibility of enrolling non-science graduates into the programme was considered. In view of the highly scientific nature of certain learning units (prompting the need to offer alternative courses in lieu of hard core hydrology and engineering discussion), enrolment of social science graduates would not be considered for now.

Follow up Actions

1. All the earlier mentioned points highlighted and discussed during the workshop were noted by the respective course facilitators. Necessary amendments and revisions will be made to the curriculum and additions and/or adjustments would be made to the courseware (lecture materials) accordingly.
2. A Course Facilitators Workshop shall be organized in mid-May 2005 to:
 - finalise the curriculum and course materials
 - assign the resource persons for each modules
 - schedule the enrolment of students and lectures
 - identify all other ‘infrastructure’ and logistic needs of the programme.
 - appoint a short term Programme Coordinator to manage the day-to-day operation of the programme.

Conclusion

The workshop was successful in achieving the intended objectives. The various agencies and prospective candidates participating in the workshop had interactively involved in previewing the academic curriculum and had provided extremely useful feedback that would further consolidate and render the curriculum more relevant to the needs of these stakeholders. The workshop had also provided an extremely important and meaningful opportunity for the resource persons themselves to re-examine the curriculum in a broader perspective while benefiting the person-to-person contacts and discourse with the prospective students and their employers.

